Overcharging by private cellular operators

2128. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that many private cellular operators are frequently overcharging their subscribers by flouting the set norms and over and above actually advertised and promised by them to their subscribers.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how Government propose to rationalize the procedure to prevent the violation of rights of the cellular subscribers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had received a number of complaints from consumers that while taking new connections through franchisees/agents of service providers, they had been promised certain tariffs for calls and certain facilities/services like Calling Line Identification Presentation (CLIP), roaming free etc. free of charge, or that charges for certain facility/services were not mentioned. However, when they received the bill they noticed that the charges were not as promised by the franchisee/agent or that charges were levied for some service/facility, which was not mentioned or shown to the customer while taking new connection.

The TRAI had also observed that in communication relating to premium rate services like quiz ringtones, tele-voting etc. advertised through SMS (Short Messaging Service), newspaper or TV (Television), the cost implication on the service is not intimated. Sometimes the messages are only followed by wordings 'T&C apply" (which means Terms and Conditions apply)

(c) The TRAI had issued a direction dated 29th June, 2005 to all Cellular Mobile Service Providers (CMSPs) and Unified Access Services Providers (UASPs) on information to customers about complete details of the tariff

plans. This direction provides that all the CMSPs and UASPs should inform the customer in writing within a week of activation of service, the complete details of his tariff plan. In addition, as and when there are any changes in any aspect/item of tariff in the chosen package, the operator shall intimate, in writing, such changes to those subscribers whose tariff packages undergo a change.

In order to protect the interests of consumers TRAI directed all CMSPs and UASPs to publish in all communications/advertisements information relating to premium rate services, the pulse rate/tariff for the service.

Poor quality of customer service of MTNL

2129. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MTNL has a phone service called 'Dolphin';

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that MTNL has not been able to properly prepare its bills and provide customer information on such bills which are generally on a very poor paper;

(c) whether it is also a fact that no proper and useful phone numbers are given on such bills so that customers could contact appropriately; and

(d) the steps proposed by MTNL to properly design bills with useful information?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The bills are printed through a computerized system and contain relevant information for the customers. Proper qualify of paper is used considering the cost of paper, printing charges etc. so as to reduce the burden of printing on the consumers.